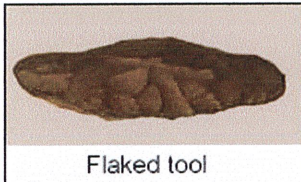




The Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The oldest part of Aruba's cultural heritage is exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Aruba. The permanent collection gives the visitor a taste of *early periods in the history and pre-history of the island*. Ceramic artifacts, shell and stone tools and ornaments are on display for all those who would like to know about **Aruba's first cultures**. Aruba was first visited by humans approximately **4500 years ago**.



Flaked tool

Stone tools from this period have been found at **Sero Muskita** and **Arikok**. These people, who started inhabiting the island 2500 years ago, most probably came from the mainland in canoes. They didn't live permanently in one place, but rather moved from one place to another in family groups of 10 to 15 members. They hunted on small animals, fished, and collected shellfish and fruits for food. We named the period in which these people inhabited the island the **Pre-ceramic Period** (2500 B.C.- 1000 A.D.). The reason for this is because no pottery was produced by this group.

The Pre-ceramic Indians *buried their dead in family groups* under large pieces of limestone. One such family group was found in a cave at **Canashito**, while many family groups (in total ca. 70 dead) were excavated at **Malmok**. Their well-organized burial tradition is probably a reflection of their small-scale, well-organized society.

Malmok Burial

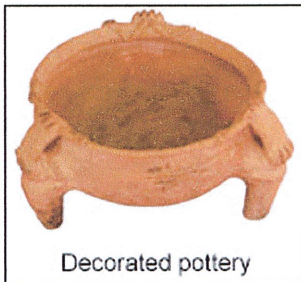
During archaeological investigations in 1989, 40 individuals from the Preceramic period were uncovered. These individuals were all buried in a specific pattern forming "family clusters". The graves were marked with different stones according to the status of the individual.



Approximately 1000 years ago a different group of people established themselves on the island. These people are named **Dabajurans** after the "type site" Dabajuro on the mainland (West

Venezuela, Falcon State). They named themselves **Caquetios**, which name is used most of the time. They came from *Northwestern Venezuela*. The period in which they inhabited the island (1000 to 1515 A.D.) we call the **Ceramic Period**.

The Caquetios were farmers and cultivated *maize* and *manioc*. They lived in villages (100-150 people) situated in **Santa Cruz, Sabaneta, Tanki Flip, Tanki Lender** and **Parkietenbos**. All villages were constructed near fresh water gullies (rooi) and near soil suitable for cultivation.



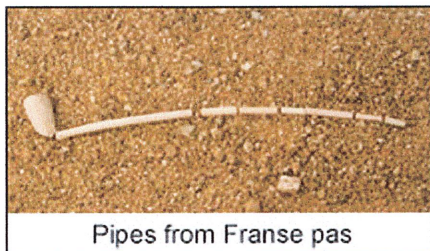
Decorated pottery

The pottery they manufactured was mainly used for cooking, storage, serving food and transportation. A large scale excavation at **Tanki Flip** uncovered the remains of several **oval houses** where extended families (mother, father, children, grandparents, uncles etc.) or multi families (more than one family) resided. Also the floor plan of smaller, round houses for one or two nuclear families (father, mother and children) were found, while also a rectangular ceremonial structure was uncovered.

The Caquetios lived on the island **until 1515** when most of them were taken by the Spanish to *Santo Domingo/Haiti*. It is not known if it were the Caquetios or another group(s) which returned in 1526 with the Spanish. Both the Spanish and this group of Indians left around 1636 when the island was taken by the Dutch.

For short periods hereafter, Aruba was occupied by the **English** (1804-1806; 1807-1816). From 1636 until the 19th century, the population of Aruba was composed mainly of Indians. Europeans and Africans were also part of this very unique composition. Unique because on most islands of the Caribbean no Indian population existed anymore during this period.

Aruba was largely used as a ranch where Indians herded cattle (horses and goats) and took care of crops.



Pipes from Franse pas

The nineteenth century is characterized by the **discovery of gold**. The Indian culture declined most probably because of the mixing with other cultures; their religion and language were replaced by the European equivalent. Reports exist of Indians still being buried in their traditional way in the 1840's. The **Historic Indian Period** ends in **1880 A.D.**

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is situated in the **Instituto di Cultura** behind the **Saint Franciscus church** in Oranjestad. The Museum is open weekdays from 8 to 12 in the morning and from 1 to 4 in the afternoon. Entrance is free and visitors can purchase some of the publications of the museum which are for sale at the desk.

Malmok Burial



A research project of the Archaeologic Museum Aruba was carried out in June / July 1989 at Malmok near the NW-coast. The first Indians who lived on Aruba had an important burial site there (ca 2000 BC). Forty skeletons were excavated : 18 females, 17 males and 5 children. The skeleton in this showcase is a man 1.54 m tall (average 1.58) , who died at an age of 20-25 y. On the average, men reached 36-37, women ca 40 years.

All graves are covered by 1-5 large limestones, as in the showcase. Most of the dead grasp the head with one hand, knees are sharply bent, Red dye is found at the back side of the skull. Ca 10% of the dead were buried below large sea-turtle carapaces. Dental health of the malmok population is excellent.

Decorated Pottery



© Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The Caquetios from the Ceramic Period used these type of decorated vessels for food-serving, probably during special ceremonies. The interior rim of this so-called tripod vessel is decorated with appendages symbolizing the legs of the frog. This was an animal associated with fertility by several Indian groups in the region (Angela collection at the Archaeological Museum of Aruba).

Flaked Tool



© Archaeological Museum of Aruba

This stone artefact is one of the oldest on display at the Archaeological Museum of Aruba. It was found at "Sero Muskita" and is believed to be from the Preceramic inhabitants of the island. Based on the technique of manufacturing and the weathered surface it's thought to be approximately 4000 years old.

Pipes from Franse Pas



This object is not part of the permanent exhibit of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba, it is the Object of the Month. In an effort to show the public more of Aruba's rich cultural heritage, an object is chosen every month and put on display in a special manner.